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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 SANTO DOMINGO 006734

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STATE FOR WHA/CAR, WHA/USOAS
NSC FOR SHANNON AND MADISON
USCINCSO ALSO FOR POLAD

E.O. 12958: DECL: 12/17/2009

TAGS: PREL DR HA

SUBJECT: DOMINICAN REPUBLIC ON OAS SYG CANDIDATE

REF: A. AMB. FOLEY-IRVING E-MAIL 12/14/04

1B. GOMEZ BERGES - CENTO E-MAIL 12/10/04
1C. SAN SALVADOR 3551 (NOTAL)

Classified By: DCM Lisa Kubiske for Reason 1.5 (b) and (d).

11. (C) Summary: Political party leader (and former foreign minister) Victor Gomez Berges told Charge Kubiske December 15 that he is interested in being considered as an alternate candidate for the OAS Secretary General job in the event the Central Americans are unable to reach a consensus. Gomez Berges has been traveling to solicit support of regional governments. The MFA informed us December 17 that the Dominican Government is in the process of deciding its position -- which is likely to be close to that of the United States. The MFA did not offer any support for Gomez Berges. Charge reiterated the U.S. position. End summary.

Visits in Santo Domingo, Port au Prince

12. (C) Political party leader Victor Gomez Berges, accompanied by coffee magnate and civic leader Rafael Perello, visited Charge Kubiske December 15 to present himself for U.S. consideration as an alternative for OAS Secretary General, in the event the Central Americans are

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unable to reach consensus on a regional candidate. Gomez Berges mentioned that he had just come from Port au Prince where he had called on Ambassador Foley in the company of Haitian Prime Minister Gerard LaTortue (Ref A) and on President Alexandre. Gomez Berges had had recent contact with other regional heads of state and had requested a meeting with USOAS Permanent Representative Maisto (Ref B).

13. (C) Charge conveyed that we were hoping for a consensus Central American candidate, preferably a former president or other elected leader with broad political experience.

14. (C) Gomez Berges said he understood the U.S. position. However, he commented, most former presidents in Latin America were tainted by corruption and he himself was a better representative of all the values the OAS stands for. The next OAS Secretary General would have to be above reproach. The Dominican Republic has no conflicts with any of its neighbors, he noted, and he has consistently been in tune with U.S. policies in the region. He said he had deep knowledge of Haiti, which would equip him well to lead the OAS stabilization efforts there.

15. (C) Gomez Berges said he had been in touch with the presidents of Guatemala, Honduras, and Panama and with the Costa Rican foreign minister, and asserted that all had expressed reservations about the Flores candidacy. Honduran President Maduro had ruled out supporting Flores, he said, because of the Honduran public's indignation over a failure by Flores to fulfill terms of a border agreement.

16. (C) Charge asked where else the Dominican would be traveling, and he outlined plans for visits to at least 5 of the 14 OAS member states in the Caribbean. He has already met with Trinidad and Tobago Prime Minister Manning (at the CCAA conference in Miami) and will next visit Jamaican Prime Minister Patterson.

Dominican Government's Position

17. (C) Gomez Berges said that before starting his travels he had checked with President Fernandez, who had "not objected." Deputy Foreign Minister Alejandra Liriano told the Charge on December 17 that the Dominican Government position remains as before: supporting a Central American consensus candidate. MFA UN/OAS division chief Michelle Cohen told another Embassy officer the same day that the position was still being decided, but would be "not far from yours." She assured us the authorities were not considering any Dominican candidate.

Comment

18. (C) Gomez Berges (Social Christian Reformist Party - PRSC) has a more conservative political orientation than President Fernandez (Dominican Liberation Party - PLD). He is associated with the formally democratic but sporadically repressive "12 years" of the late President Balaguer (1982-1994). Under these circumstances, it is extremely unlikely Gomez Berges can gain the support of his nation's government for his candidacy.

Biographic Data

19. (U) Gomez Berges served as foreign minister, 1972-76, and held four other ministerial portfolios (interior, education, finance, industry/trade) from 1965-78. In 1975, Costa Rica and Mexico put forward his name as an option for OAS secretary general; Balaguer refused to support his bid,

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according to Gomez Berges, and he fell one vote short of being elected. He served as a senator, 1978-82, and as ambassador successively to the Vatican, Greece, Cyprus, Argentina, and Paraguay in the 1980s and 1990s. He headed the state-owned Dominican Electricity Corporation (1988-90) and Industrial Development Corporation (1994-96), and served in the Central American Parliament (2000-04). A senior leader of the Social Christian Reformist Party (PRSC), the third-ranked Dominican political party, Gomez Berges served as a campaign adviser to former presidential candidate Eduardo Estrella in the 2004 election. Gomez Berges is also a lawyer, university professor, business consultant, writer, and news commentator.

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